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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/27/2018  
TAGS: KWBG PBTS PREL PHUM IS  
SUBJECT: 200 PALESTINIAN OLIVE TREES UPROOTED IN  
JERUSALEM-AREA BARRIER CONSTRUCTION

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On June 23, Israeli contractors guarded by IDF troops uprooted some 200 olive trees on private land in Bayt Hanina al-Balad, northwest of Jerusalem, and replanted them on other Palestinian-owned land, in conjunction with renewed separation barrier construction. Press reported scuffles between IDF and villagers as the trees were uprooted and as work began on the barrier between Ramot and Bayt Hanina al-Balad. END SUMMARY

200 Olive Trees Uprooted

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¶2. (C) According to Palestinian press and local contacts, Israeli contractors with heavy equipment, guarded by IDF soldiers, uprooted some 200 olive trees in Bayt Hanina al-Balad, prompting scuffles between villagers and Israeli security forces. (NOTE: Bayt Hanina al-Balad is adjacent to the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Bayt Hanina, but is outside the GOI-defined Jerusalem municipal boundary and route of the separation barrier. END NOTE). Haya Alayed of UN OCHA told PolOff June 24 that the 200 trees were replanted on nearby land belonging to other Palestinians without consultation with either the owners of the trees or the new land. Alayed said villagers told her that they did not want the trees replanted on their land, but could not stop it. Muhammad Dahleh, a lawyer who represents Bayt Hanina al-Balad residents, told PolOff June 25 that the 200 olive trees were very old, "Roman" trees that are virtually impossible to relocate without killing. He said the replanted trees will be inside the barrier once it is completed, while the owners will be outside.

Construction Renewed on NW Jerusalem Barrier

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¶3. (C) There is renewed barrier construction northeast of the Israeli neighborhood of Ramot and around Bayt Hanina al-Balad, with heavy equipment leveling ground and preparing associated infrastructure for the barrier. According to PA Jerusalem Affairs Advisor Hatim Abd al-Qadr, recent changes to the barrier's route will bring seven families inside the barrier, who he said are rumored to have struck a deal with local IDF commanders to give them access to both Jerusalem and the West Bank.

WALLES